

THE HISTORY OF THE CATTLE INDUSTRY
OF THE FLINT HILLS OF KANSAS

by

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Preface

In this study I have sought to tell clearly the story of the cattle industry of the Flint Hills, from the Texas drives which followed the Civil War to the present time. I have attempted to show the importance of the area to the state of Kansas and to the cattle industry. The principal reason for my interest in this subject is the fact that I have lived in the region until recently. Nebraska was chosen as the type county because I am more familiar with conditions there, and it has the large bluestem pastures, the numerous clear springs, and the fertile valleys so typical of the region.

Until a few years ago the Flint Hills and their importance in the cattle industry were taken as a matter of course by the general public. However, the droughts of the last five years with their damaging effect upon the bluestem grasses have aroused the concern of the people of the area, and others vitally influenced by the cattle industry. There is a possibility that if the grass does not recover and again cover the hills, there may be a change of industry necessary. This would eliminate the Flint Hills from an important stage in the finishing of thousands of transient cattle yearly.

For most of the material used, I have relied upon the resources of the Kansas Historical Library and the Newspaper Room of the Kansas Memorial Building in Topeka. The library of Kansas State College, and private papers and records of old cattlemen of Wabaunsee County were also used.

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Lydia Andree Skeen.

Chapter I

BEGINNINGS OF THE KANSAS CATTLE INDUSTRY: GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS

In the eastern third of the state of Kansas lies a strip of rough and hilly land, distinguished by an east-facing hard-limestone escarpment running irregularly north and south from some twenty miles north of the Kansas River to the Oklahoma line. These Flint Hills, ranging from 50 to more than 400 feet higher than the surrounding country, are very well seen near Manhattan, Cottonwood Falls, Eureka, and elsewhere. Between the hills are flat plains of rich land formed by the softer rocks of the area. Included in this region are the following counties in part or entirely: Marshall, Geary, Pottawatomie, Webster, Lyon, Morris, Chase, Merion, Butler, Greenwood, Elk, Cowley, Riley, and Cheatequa.¹

This area is especially adapted to the cattle industry, because of its coverage of big and little bluestem grasses. The former is often known as bluejoint, turkeyfoot, and finger-spiked Indian grass. The leaves are long, soft,

¹ Raymond C. Moore, The Surface Features of Kansas, Map (Lawrence, 1936).

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tender, and hairy on the margin, and shoot directly from the roots. Flowering stocks appear in late summer, reaching a height of from three to seven feet. These stems are more or less purple at the joints, thus suggesting the usual name.

At the tip of the stalk are from two to five spikes of purplish flowers, arranged in such a fashion as to give the name of turkey-foot grass. Often side branches arise from the joints, parallel to the main stem, each of which has a flower cluster like that on the main stalk. The amount of seed produced is meager in quantity.²

The little bluestem is a smaller plant, usually growing not more than two or three feet high. Most of the leaves grow from the stalks, which are more numerous than in the big bluestem. Little bluestem appears in bunches when establishing itself, and is frequently called bunch grass.

The mass of broad and narrow blades of the big and little bluestem intermixed forms a mat with numerous seed stalks on richer soils, and a generous covering on the highest and poorest grounds.³ The growth is rank when

² A. C. Hitchcock, "Big Bluestem," in Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twelfth Biennial Report, 1899-1900 (Topeka, 1901), pp. 542-545.

³ Hitchcock, "Little Bluestem," in Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twelfth Biennial Report, 1899-1900, pp. 545-547.

rainfall is abundant. In the drier seasons the reduced quantity is offset by improved quality due to the storing up of more sunshine and nutriment. In the spring and summer months the bluestem has no superior as pasture for the production of beef or milk. When cut and cured for hay, it ranks high for healthfulness but rather low in nutrition.

For the herdman's use there are few acres of waste-lands. The steepest hillsides and highest mounds, where in the winter the surface seems to be nothing but disintegrated limestone, are in the summer covered with the sweet nutritious bluestem grasses. The tough and heavy sod attests that these are the survival of the fittest. Neither alfalfa, red clover, bluegrass, nor any other legume or cultivated grass can excel the native bluestem in putting on flesh and increasing the weight of beef steers during the summer pasturing season.

There are at least five ledges of limestone between the level of the valleys and the highest plateaus, and at each outcropping there is a line of broken rock of various thicknesses in the process of weathering. The disintegrated material is being spread all over the slopes below. Through weathering the supply of lime at the grass roots is being constantly renewed and maintained.

The cattle themselves show their preference for grass

which contains the greatest amount of lime. A ranchman in Chase County said that during his years of management, 1883-1887, the cattle throughout the seasons fed more closely along the limestone outcrops and the slopes leading down from them than they did on the ridges above.⁴

The hills and intervening valleys abound in springs, which supply an abundance of pure cool water on almost every quarter section of land and at all seasons of the year. In most localities good wells are readily obtained by digging from eight to thirty feet. Once a sufficient supply of water is obtained, it seldom fails to hold out through the longest drouth.⁵ Windmills have been used for pumping since the late 1860's.⁶

The timber, with the exception of an occasional wooded hillside or a tree claim, is confined to the streams and ravines, where a broad variety is found. The trees most frequently seen are the cottonwood, hickory, oak, black walnut, hackberry, sycamore, elm, ash, and locust.

The Flint Hill pastures were long neglected by pioneers who passed through them, without stopping to investigate, while on their way to the fertile prairie lands of

4 H. R. Hilton, "The Bluestem Pastures of Kansas," in Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-sixth Biennial Report, 1927-28 (Topeka, 1929), p. 188.

5 Andrew Stark, editor, Annual Kansas Register, 1864 (Leavenworth, c. 1864), p. 69.

6 Walter P. Webb, The Great Plains (Chicago, 1931), p. 348.

central Kansas. Furthermore, the newcomers had little money to start a livestock industry on such a capitalistic basis as the geographic conditions demanded for efficient operation. Consequently, the richer valleys were cut up into homesteads, and later railroad grants retarded the development of ranching on the rest.⁷

Before the Civil War some cattle were driven north from Texas, but by 1859 the Kansas Territory had passed laws prohibiting entrance of these cattle into eastern counties where they might infect local stock.⁸ No cattlemen made the long northern drive to market during the Civil War; therefore by 1865 there were many fat cattle in Texas. They could be bought there for \$3 or \$4 per head, on the average, but even at this price there were no buyers. The same cattle in northern markets would have brought \$30 or \$40, so the cattlemen of Texas determined to drive to this profitable market.⁹ Accordingly, in the winter of 1865-66 large herds were collected at many points, and driven north as soon as grass was sufficiently advanced to make the journey possible.¹⁰

7 Hilton, *loc. cit.*, p. 188.

8 Territory of Kansas, Private Laws, 1859 (Lecompton, c. 1859), p. 65.

9 Tenth Census, Statistics of Agriculture, Table on page 985.

10 Edward Everett Dale, "Those Kansas Jayhawkers, A Study in Sectionalism," in Agricultural History, Vol II (October, 1928), p. 63.

These drives, with from 1,000, to 3,000 choice steers, usually began late in March or early in April. Each herd was accompanied by a boss and from eight to fourteen cowboys, together with a cook who drove the "chuck wagon" in which was hauled the food and bedding.

The common trails were the Chisholm, the East Shawnee, and the West Shawnee, the former being the usual route. It led through Caldwell, Wichita, Newton, and Abilene, and was west of the Bluestem area. The West Shawnee Trail reached Junction City, in the heart of the Flint Hills, while the East Shawnee led into western Missouri.¹¹

As the cattle reached the northern grounds, they found the grass luxuriant, for by 1865 the buffaloes were almost gone and thus no longer closely cropped the green herbage.¹² The history of the cattle industry in Kansas did not begin until after 1865, when the cattle came up the trails from Texas.¹³ For a few years almost all of these were shipped directly to markets in the East. Then many large ranchmen of the Southwest discovered their ranges were overstocked.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 65.

¹² Ernest S. Osgood, The Day of the Cattleman, (Minneapolis, 1929), p. 31.

¹³ Edward Everett Dale, The Range Cattle Industry, (Norman, Oklahoma, 1930), p. 46.

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They could no longer prepare their beef cattle for the slaughterhouse or feedlots in the corn-producing states. More and better grazing lands were required. It was seen that, if driving cattle from Texas to Kansas was to continue in the future, the drovers would act wisely to possess, lease, or buy choice stock ranch locations, and hold their animals until improved.¹⁴ A few of these ranchmen investigated the grazing lands of the limestone belt in Kansas. They bought and fenced pastures or leased others that had been inclosed by the local men. These pastures ranged in size from 1,000 to 25,000 acres, and it became quite an industry to keep them stocked and to prepare the cattle for market. This will be shown in a later chapter.

14 Hilton, loc. cit., p. 190.

Chapter II

FROM OPEN RANGE TO FENCES

The range industry assumed definite form after the Civil War, but the entrance of railways and the establishment of packing houses and stockyards were necessary to give it permanence. Within a decade from the time of the first Texas drives to Kansas, the first transcontinental railroad was built, bringing immigrants to settle upon the prairies. As the advantages of this great open country with its bluestem ranges and fertile valleys became known, great investments of capital followed and the business acquired prestige in the financial world. The livestock industry followed the victory over the Indians and the destruction of the buffalo, but these in turn succumbed to the small ranchmen and the armies of settlers.¹

For twenty-five years the range industry was maintained on the grass alone--at first lavishly and later sparingly. Barbed wire fencing, by the numerous small settlers who raised grain, broke up the many acres of open range. The land was overstocked and therefore not capable

¹ Louis Pelzer, The Cattleman's Frontier (Glendale, California, 1936), p. 351.

of producing grass-fat livestock. For a few years prices were high, but investments were so heavy that when financial crises struck, the stockmen were unprepared. Snowstorms often took their toll as the underfed, unprotected cattle were not strong enough to live through the storm. Easterners, unaccustomed to the western cattle industry, would engage in the business till the results of mismanagement overtook them. These forces all helped to undermine the cattle kingdom of forty years ago.²

For some years cattle were allowed to range freely over the Flint Hills. But in 1868, after the homesteaders and other small settlers had gained enough voice to be heard by the government, the legislature passed the first herd law. This act gave the people of any township the right to petition the county commissioners for an order to confine animals at night. If three-fifths of the voters who voted at the last election petitioned, the order was to be made and notice given. Then owners, freighters, and drivers, resident or otherwise, were liable for the depredations of their animals.³

Stray cattle were so much a matter of consideration

² *Ibid.*, p. 287.

³ State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1868, p. 302.

that each county newspaper carried a list. Citizens or householders were permitted to take up wandering cattle upon their premises. When they were taken up there was a definite procedure to follow.⁴ The animal was advertised in the township by three written or printed bulletins, if not then redeemed it was advertised in the Kansas Farmer. If the animal was not claimed within twelve months it was sold. After expenses were discounted, one-half the value of the animal belonged to the county to be used in the school fund, and the remainder was given to the claimant.⁵ If a bull over one year old was permitted to run at large, an amendment to this law made the owner guilty of misdemeanor and provided for a fine of \$5 upon conviction for the first offense and \$10 for a subsequent offense.⁶

In 1872 Kansas passed a law known as the "Stock or Herd Law" to provide for the regulation of animals running at large at any time. The board of county commissioners of the different counties had the power to designate the animals not allowed to range freely within the bounds of their county. A man had the right to take a lien on stock which had caused injury to his property while running at large.⁷

4 Ibid., p. 307.

5 Ibid., p. 310.

6 Ibid., p. 430.

7 State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1872, pp. 384-385.

Two years after the State passed the law it was in effect in Chautauque, Cowley, Marion, and Morris Counties.⁸

The result was shown in the number of pastures and fields inclosed by stone or hedge fences. Hedge or orange orange trees were cheap and grew rapidly into a tight fence. In the Flint Hill region there was an abundance of material for stone fences, and to encourage the building of these and the growing of hedges, the legislature of 1867 passed a law giving a bounty of five cents a rod for a period of eight years.⁹ Since the total subsidy would amount to forty cents a rod, many of the farmers availed themselves of this benefit. Wabunsee County alone had thousands of acres of fields and pastures inclosed by stone fences, the remnants are seen today. In fact, some of them are still in use. The old settlers tell stories of hiring some of the many Negroes that came into the region after the Civil War, and though they were slow they worked for very meager pay.

In 1874 barbed wire was first used, but it was expensive and people were afraid to use it. Consequently, its widespread use was not rapid.¹⁰ The cattle were wild and

⁸ Kansas Academy of Science, Third Annual Report, 1874 (Topeka, c. 1875), p. 289.

⁹ State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1867, p. 69.

¹⁰ Dale, The Range Cattle Industry, p. 121.

unaccustomed to the wire. Often they were badly cut by running into it, and in some cases screwworms infested the wounds to cause death.¹¹ Lightning was another drawback to the use of barbed wire for fencing. In 1889, an article taken from the Chetopa Democrat reads as follows: "During the late storm ten head of cattle belonging to L. H. Summers, two and one-half miles south of Oswego were struck and instantly killed by a bolt of lightning. The cattle drifted against the barbed wire fence by the force of the storm; the lightning struck the wire and its deadly effect was felt wherever the cattle touched the wire. Verily, the deadly barbed wire gets in its work in more ways than one."¹² It is a well-known fact that wire struck by lightning still kills some cattle each year, but this is taken as a matter of course, and owners of cattle safeguard their assets by the use of insurance.

The advent of barbed wire was an important result in the decline of the cattle kingdom, for it brought about the disappearance of the open, free range, by converting it into big pastures. This was the greatest factor in the disappearance of the native longhorn and made possible blooded livestock. The farmer with barbed wire fences

11 Webb, The Great Plains, p. 307.

12 Chetopa Democrat, May 25, 1889.

could introduce blooded stock without the risk of promiscuous crossings. The many fences made cattle drives impractical, so the cattlemen were forced to use the railroads. Often bitter feelings arose. In some localities cattlemen cut the wire fences, being openly opposed to fencing.¹³

Many people with a few cattle were anxious to make some extra money herding livestock for others. In the 1870's it was not uncommon to see advertisements in the county newspapers offering such services. But the counties took advantage of the hard law as they became more settled, because of these restrictions less herding was done. By 1877 Butler County had the herd law. In that county fence building and hedge growing were not so active as in other counties, but the growing of small grains increased rapidly. The land was quickly settled and cultivated, and soon the cost of herding stock and fencing pastures was less than the cost of inclosing corn or wheat lands would have been. After having the law for several years in Chautauque County, there was a greater home market for grain, and cattle raising was increased.¹⁴

Nearly all the pasture land in Chase County was open

¹³ Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-313.

¹⁴ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, First Biennial Report, 1877-78, pp. 287-287.

range in 1862, and on this the adjoining valley farmers could pasture their livestock at will. Within two years from that date practically all of the grass land was inclosed by fences and has been used for feeding range and native staers ever since. This same change from unfenced to fenced pastures took place in all of the 4,000,000 acres of the Bluestem area.¹⁵ By 1885 only three counties, Chase, Riley, and Wabaunsee, had no hard law. The area of fenced land grew from thirty-seven and one-half per cent in 1875 to seventy-five per cent in 1885.¹⁶

As late as 1885, W. A. Tanner a ranchman of Rock Creek Township of Wabaunsee County, hired a sixteen year old boy for fifty cents a day to care for cattle which he had contracted to hard at fifty cents per head for the season for owners of small ranches in the surrounding area. In this manner the rancher fed his own herd and still made a profit, for the cattle were grazed on public land which was called open range. This one boy with a horse cared for 400 cattle, which ranged over an area of approximately thirty square miles.¹⁷

¹⁵ Hilton, "The Bluestem Pastures of Kansas," in Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-sixth Biennial Report, 1927-28, p. 190.

¹⁶ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1875, pp. 103-193; Fifth Biennial Report, 1885-86, 112-200.

¹⁷ Account book of J. A. Skeen for 1885.

By 1868 agitation for the herd law became quite active in Wabaunsee County, but eleven more years passed before it was put into effect. Prominent grain farmers were in favor of such a law, for the large tracts of open prairie on which the early settlers grazed their stock, were passing because of increased population. Small farmers were compelled to graze cattle on their own pastures and at the same time forced to maintain the fences inclosing their farms, just for the few, who pastured cattle on public roads and highways. It was claimed that vegetation on the road was of little value and there were few acres of land in the county on which livestock could subsist. As a result the breaking down of fences, and the ruining of farmers' crops were frequent occurrences.

When cattle broke into enclosures and destroyed crops, friendly feelings were not fostered between neighbors. A notable case of this type was known as the Fooks-Killer feud, which took place in Wabaunsee County. Matt Fooks, a German farmer had cattle that broke into the fields of George Miller, an English farmer, and damaged his crops. Miller killed Fooks and was convicted of manslaughter in the first degree, for which he was sentenced to six years in prison.¹⁸

¹⁸ Matt Thompson, Early History of Wabaunsee County, Kansas (Alma, Kansas, 1901), p. 162.

Grazing rapidly developed into an important industry in Wabaunsee County. A. S. Allendorph saw an inviting field for the cattle business when he came to Wabaunsee in 1888. He leased a large acreage of pasture land, the lease to run for five years, and the tax on the land was the rental value. Two thousand cattle were driven from Douglas County to Wabaunsee in the spring, grazed there and returned to Douglas County. The charge for this service the first season was \$1.50 per head. The land was all open prairie, but the second year seven sections were fenced and 4,000 head secured at \$1.75. The cattle came from the A. L. Ranch, the property of the Acoma Land and Cattle Company of New Mexico.

In 1890, the increase in business necessitated the leasing of more pasture land, for that year the firm of Allendorph and Company pastured 16,000 head. When they were known to have a successful business in the fourth year, others embarked in the same type of venture, and rent was raised to \$200 for a section of land.¹⁹

The herd law was discussed by the commissioners of Wabaunsee County in 1890, but the cattleman had influence enough to delay passage. George Ceeey of Volland, a prominent cattleman of that time and still known as one today,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 221.

in an article printed in the Alma Enterprise expressed the following opinion: "It is a damage to the county, all the fences will run down so that it will be impossible to move cattle through the county to and from pastures. As the largest part of the county is grazing land, and the county is benefited by having all the cattle pastured on the rough land. As it is, the farm land is all fenced except the south side of the county, and the most of the farmers living along the north edge of the strip have a fence, and cattle are kept back on the rough lands. Should the law pass, it says 'to prohibit the running at large of all domestic cattle and hogs,' Texas cattle can still run at large for they are not domesticated cattle.

"Every farmer should read what the penalty is before he signs the petition and also take into consideration what the cost and fines would be on a small bunch of cattle should they break out of his yard or pasture.

"If a man has a lawful fence he cannot collect damages. Every farmer that has cattle or is in favor of cattle running at large should sign the remonetranee or appear before the board of commissioners, Tuesday, October 21st." Mr. Casey and other cattlemen were able to influence the voters against the passage of such a law.²⁰

²⁰ Alma Enterprise, May 18, 1888.

Cattle in larger numbers came to the Flint Hills.

There was no average acreage per cow designated on the open range, and prices rose with the greater demand for grass. In 1894 a charge of \$2 per head a season for older livestock and \$1.75 for yearlings was made. This rose to \$3.50 a few years later.²¹ As the herd law forced the open range from existence the cost of pasture increased, and there was a definite acreage for each cow.

When in 1899 the herd law was accepted in Wabaunsee County, important cattlemen had not ceased to object, for they thought the area of two-thirds pasture and one-third farms should be dedicated to the livestock industry. The farmers, however, convinced the commissioners of the need for grain to finish cattle for market.²²

It was not until April, 1931 that the herd law became universal in Kansas. Hamilton County, in the western tier, gave up the fight and accepted the law which made fences necessary.²³

²¹ Herdbooks of A. J. Skeen for 1894-1898.

²² Alma Enterprise, May 26, 1899.

²³ Kansas City Times, January 19, 1931.

Chapter III

CATTLE CORPORATIONS AND CATTLE BRANDS

Livestock associations grew in number and power with the growth of the cattle industry. There were both local and general types of organizations.¹ A notable example of the latter was the Wyoming Stock Growers Association of 1873, which covered such a large area that many of the important cattlemen of the Flint Hills were members.² The same year the Livestock Men's National Association was formed and in 1885 the Kansas Stock Growers Association was organized.³ Owners of the various breeds of cattle also formed confederations.

One finds striking examples of financial success of well-known individuals or partnerships prior to the rise of the great cattle companies.⁴ This was possible because of high prices for beef and low over-head cost, brought about by the open range.⁵ In the seventies grasslands were not overstocked, and a steady stream of grazing cattle came from Texas. People who heard of the money to be gained

1 Dals, The Range Cattle Industry, p. 99.

2 Interview with George Waugh, Eskridge, Kansas, July 2, 1935.

3 Joseph G. McCoy, Historical Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest (Kansas City, c. 1874), p. 252.

4 Louis Pelzer, The Cattleman's Frontier, p. 153.

5 Ibid., 154.

organized companies. They little knew what blizzards, nesters, and small ranchmen could do to intended profits.

Not only associations, but also individuals made huge profits. During an interview with George Waugh, formerly of Eskridge, he showed papers to prove that in one year he gained \$50,000 on his cattle; but when surprise was shown, he smilingly said, "I lost more than that one other year."

Profits had been so attractive that by 1891, many foreign companies had entered the field. As a direct result Kansas passed the Alien Land Act, which provided that in no corporation or association more than twenty per cent of the stock could be owned by non-citizens of the United States. The government was not to interfere with the persons or companies taking land in payment of debt or contract if the land was sold to some citizen within three years. If not sold within that time the land became the property of the State.⁶

These corporations, associations, drovers, shippers, and feeders of cattle were almost unavoidably heavy borrowers of money. Finance corporations and banking institutions were the common sources from which they obtained loans. In years of high prices for livestock these lending

⁶ Stats. of Kansas, Session Laws, 1891, p. 7.

institutions flourished, but in a year such as 1893, many institutions failed. In that year the First National Bank of Kansas City was ordered to be liquidated for lack of funds, but fortunately for many cattlemen it was able to reopen its doors in a few weeks.⁷

Associations had brand inspectors or detectives to discover illegal brands, as well as, marks that had been retouched or altered.⁸ It was observed that in practically every car of cattle shipped from the South and Southwest, and fed in the Flint Hills, there were some stray or retouched brands.⁹ Inspectors displayed uncanny ability to discern those retouched, and their knowledge of marks was excellent. These men supervised the sale of thousands of strays and mavericks at railway terminals and at stockyards. From the time the animals left the range until slaughtered they were under alert espionage. The proceeds from the strays was given to the owners, but the treasury of the association gained from the sale of the mavericks.

In 1901 an act was passed providing for the appointment of inspectors in certain counties to examine brands or marks on stock about to be shipped from, through, or to any point,

⁷ McCoy, Cattle Trade of East and Southwest, p. 41.

⁸ Pelzer, op. cit., p. 93.

⁹ Interview with George Waugh.

in that Kansas County.¹⁰ This act put the matter into the hands of the State and relieved the increasing burden of the cattle associations.¹¹

Stringent laws were passed to require marking and branding of all cattle. This was advisable, for livestock stealing was common and quarrels over cattle numerous. A description of marks and brands necessary by law, was found in each county, for a record was kept by the county clerk. In Wabaunsee County alone there were 163 cattlemen with registered brands, the first recording was made in 1884, and the last in 1935. In the Appendix it may be seen that many owners used their initials. An occasion of a difficulty due to lack of training, is told by a member of a family with the initial of the surname, the letter S. The owner had one of the hired men make the branding iron. Instead of the letter S appearing on the livestock the iron had been mistakenly shaped to make the brand appear as a rather odd shaped figure 2. Since time and materials were at a premium, the iron was retained.¹²

Butchers were required to keep a record open for

10 State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1901, p. 171.

11 State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1919, pp. 315-16.

12 Wabaunsee County Cattle Brands, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, 1938.

13 Interview with Charisa Sksen, Eskridge, Kansas, November 6, 1937.

inspection of all slaughtered animals. These records of brands were an aid in apprehending cattle thieves. In Wabaunsee County, in the vicinity of Alma, several men were arrested and convicted by such testimony.¹⁴

Brands were about five inches in diameter and were placed on the thigh or hip, but within the last thirty-five years they have been smaller and are more often placed on the jaw. Perhaps this was because of the opinion that in tanning leather losses were due to the branding iron. Texas slaughter leather, in 1897, free from brands sold for twenty-one cents a pound, while the same quality but branded sold at eight and one-half cents a pound.¹⁵ There was no reason for brands to be over four inches in diameter.

This true story involving brands is told by an old cattlemen. It is a method by which a well-known rancher increased the size of his herd. The old cattlemen said his father had taken three stray two-year-old steers that had brands upon them but were not recognized. They had been advertised in the manner provided by law and soon a man came to claim them. The holder of the steers asked to see his brand, consequently the claimer showed a paper with quite a list on one side, the other was quite blank. The holder

¹⁴ Alma Enterprise, April 18, 1885.

¹⁵ Kansas Farmer, Topeka, June 7, 1898.

insisted that none were identical with those upon the steers he was holding. The man who had come to claim the cattle said he would like to look at them anyway, and wished to be directed to the animals. Since there was no reason for a refusal the request was granted.

Within a half hour the man came back and said, "Those are my steers."

"How can you account for that?" the holder asked, "You did not have their identification among your list of brands."

The claimant replied, "Here it is on the opposite side of the sheet."

He had looked at the strayed livestock carefully and was able to copy the brand of them on the blank paper. Nothing could be done but allow him to take the steers, although the old cattleman said harsh words were exchanged. The man telling the story said he was quite certain that this was not the only time this individual used the above method to increase his herd.

Chapter IV

INFLUENCE OF RAILROADS AND LAND GRANTS
ON THE CATTLE INDUSTRY

Without railroads the grasslands of Kansas could not have become very important as grazing lands. It is difficult and slow to move cattle by herding, and if not grazed they will lose much weight unless a fast easy means of moving them is provided.

Railway construction began in Kansas in 1866, and by July 1 the Kansas Pacific had progressed to Junction City in the Flint Hills. Congress gave to this railroad, grants in Kansas amounting to 6,000,000 acres, thus they hoped to encourage building.¹ The country traversed was but sparsely settled; the towns consisted for the most part of a few rude cabins including the inevitable saloon.² But when the railroad advertised land and transportation facilities as inducements for settlement, many immigrants came to Kansas. The Kansas Pacific, which later became a branch of the Union Pacific, had grants of land in the following bluestem counties: Wabunss, Pottawatomie, Morris, Riley, and

1 Palzer, The Cattleman's Frontier, p. 82.

2 Charles Morseu Berger, "Cattle Trails of the Prairies," in Frontier Days, Oliver G. Swan, editor (Boston, 1892), p. 250.

Marion.³ The eleven-year plan of sale with the price ranging from \$2 to \$6 per acre was followed. To encourage people to settle permanently upon their land, deductions were made for cultivation of the soil.

In 1867 people bringing up large herds of cattle from Texas had no definite place to drive them. Joseph McCoy took a trip up the Kansas Pacific. He visited Junction City and offered to buy from one of the leading business men a tract of land sufficiently large to build a stockyard and other facilities necessary for cattle shipping. An exorbitant price was asked, and in the end the men who held the land flatly refused to sell at any price.⁴ By this stupid act, they drove from Junction City and incidentally from the Flint Hills, a trade which developed into many millions of dollars. Solomon and Salina were considered as fine sites. However, the cattle business in those days was synonymous with saloons and rough cowboys the business men of Solomon and Salina frowned upon the project and Abilene got the business. There were not enough people in Abilene to object and the surrounding country was well watered, had

³ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Third Annual Report, 1874, p. 328.

⁴ McCoy, Cattle Trade of West and Southwest, p. 41.

⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

excellent grass, and was adapted to holding cattle.

After long and discouraging negotiations with the Kansas Pacific and other railroads leading into St. Louis, the McCoy Brothers succeeded in gaining a highly advantageous contract for shipping Texas cattle from Abilene to Kansas City and other eastern markets. Then by advertising they proceeded to convince the cattle barons that it was sound logic to ship instead of drive livestock to market.⁶

The first shipment of Texas cattle was made to Chicago on September 5, 1867. That was a bad cattle year, for there was little food and severe electric storms stymied cattle and made them so nervous they would not fatten. Notwithstanding this fact, there were 1000 cars, about 35,000 cattle, shipped out of Abilene that year.⁷ There were nearly 75,000 in 1869, and in 1871 there were 200,000 cattle in the State, with 60,000 within a days ride of Abilene.⁸

The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad Company was incorporated in March 1863, with authority to build a railroad from Atchison to the western boundary of the State in the direction of Santa Fe, New Mexico. A land grant of

⁶ Ibid., pp. 106-107.

⁷ Adolph Roenigk, Pioneer History of Kansas (Topeka, 1933), p. 30.

⁸ Floyd Benjamin Streeter, Prairie Trails and Cow Towns (Boston, 1936), p. 63.

6,400 acres per mile was secured on the condition that the road should be completed within ten years of the date of the charter.⁹ This was accomplished and 441,469 acres of the Flint Hills were included in the grant. This railroad brought thousands of cattle from the Southwest--Arizona and New Mexico--and continues to furnish transportation for those that each year feed upon the bluestem grasses.

The terms of sale of this railroad land were of four types, stated as follows:

First: An eleven-year credit plan with seven per cent interest. At the date of purchase ten per cent of the principal was paid with seven per cent interest on the balance, for the first and second year only. Interest was paid but from the third year on, and one-tenth of the principal was included. Deductions were made when the owner cultivated one-fifth of the land.

Second: This was another eleven-year credit plan with seven per cent interest but no principal due for four years. For the other eight years one-eighth of the principal and seven per cent interest was due each year. Premium was paid for improvement.

Third: Three annual payments were to be made with a twenty-per-cent immediate reduction on the appraised value.

⁹ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Second Annual

One-third of the cash demand was paid at once and ten per cent interest, with one-third to be paid each year.

Fourth: This was a cash sale, in which there was a discount of twenty per cent on the appraised value.¹⁰

The Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad was organized in 1874, with a grant of 940,484 acres in the State. Of this 461,386 acres were in the Flint Hill counties of Morris, Chase, Wabunsee, Lyon, Greenwood, Butler, and Riley. The average price received for this land was \$4.30 per acre.¹¹ It is over this railroad the countless numbers of cattle were brought from Texas, and the completion of the road removed the cause for border warfare.

By 1875, Kansas had 2,182 miles of railway lines traversing every section of her productive area. This feat was accomplished in ten years time. The railroad companies were required to make cattle guards and pay damages sustained by individuals and livestock.¹² Shippers and owners of livestock were protected in this manner. Reports of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe and of the Rock Island railroads show that cattle shipments reached their peak from 1899 to

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 567.

¹¹ Land Department of M. K. and T. Rr., Third Annual Report, 1874 (Topeka, 1875), pp. 382-385.

¹² Alma News, July 14, 1875.

¹³ State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1869, p. 171. Session Laws, 1874, pp. 143-144.

1902.¹⁴

The land granted to railroads was through the more fertile sections. This kept people from homesteading, and they had no money to buy the railroad lands. Thus the cattle corporations which were formed bought that land and obtained large tracts. They often times bought out the disheartened homesteeder to increase their holdings.

The United States Government gave a large area of Kansas land for our public schools. In this way the schools were improved and the advertised land readily sold. There were 72 sections or 46,080 acres given for Kansas University; Kansas State College obtained 81,601 acres of choice land; and 38,460 acres were allotted to the Emporia State College.¹⁵ Marshall, Lyon, Wabaunsee, and Riley Counties were the only counties of the Eluestem area included in these grants. For common schools the sixteenth and thirty-sixth section in each township in the state were granted for school purposes. Because they were school lands they received considerable advertising. Population increased, people more quickly settled the region, and these lands early supplied much of the grain fed to the cattle.

¹⁴ Kansas City Stock Yards, Livestock Reports, 1884-1902, Vol. II (Kansas City, 1902), pp. 14-32.

¹⁵ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Fifth Annual Report, 1876, p. 258.

The price of this school land ranged from \$5 an acre in Cowley County, to \$7.25 an acre in Butler County.¹⁶ Money was scarce, so this was a high price, in that large areas were required by ranchmen.

¹⁶ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Fourth Annual Report, 1895, pp. 122-132.

Chapter V

CATTLE DISEASES OF CENTRAL KANSAS

As in every locality where cattle are important, there are in Kansas diseases that affect the lives of the cattle.

In the late fifties, the cattle that came north from Texas were immune to Texas, called also Spanish fever and splenic fever, but they carried the tick that transmitted the disease to the cattle of the northern states. This made the cattle owners of Kansas quite bitter against the Texas drive, and in 1859 the Kansas legislature passed the law which prohibited between June 1 and November 1 the driving of Texas, Arkansas, and Indian cattle into the eastern counties, where they might infect local stock with the fever.¹ In the winter the danger of the fever was less, because the cold weather killed the tick.

As the Kansas farmers moved westward, the legislature passed a quarantine law that prohibited driving Texas cattle into the State limits, between the days of April 1 and November 1 of each year.² The entire state was under quarantine and all cattle were restricted. In this manner Kansas was virtually regulating commerce between states. This was

¹ Territory of Kansas, Private Laws, 1859, p. 65.

² State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1861, pp. 279-281.

a violation of the Federal Constitution. In a similar case tried in a Missouri court, the court decided that only diseased cattle could be restricted from the state. This made veterinary service necessary for the cattle were to be inspected at the state line.³ For a time the above decision made the quarantine law practically a dead letter.

However, it was lawful and advisable as the farmers moved west to place a quarantine on certain sections. In 1867 between March 1 and December 1 the longhorns were driven into that portion of the State just east of Cowley County. The penalty for disobedience of the quarantine law was thirty days to six months in jail, with double penalties for each subsequent offense, and a fine of from \$100 to \$1000 could be inflicted in addition to the jail sentence. The law further provided that no one should drive Texas cattle within five miles of any highway or ranch, without the consent of the settler or owner of such a ranch. This permission was in many cases impossible to procure. This cut down the western section where cattle were allowed to enter from March 1 to December 1.⁴ They were held in quarantine until early winter before they could enter that section of the State. Drovers to the northern ranges were forced,

³ Osgood, The Day of the Cattleman, p. 163.

⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

either to bend the line of drive further and further westward to escape these restrictions, or plan to start in time to be out of the State before the quarantine became effective.

The line of quarantine of 1867 followed when the domesticated cattle moved westward. This line and others that followed were so far west, that they affected the Flint Hills by keeping the cattle drives out of the area. Domestic cattle were inclosed for the most part by fences, and these caused difficulty to the passing herds. During the whole period of open ranges, the danger from the disease affected in a marked degree the development of the business of the State. Quarantine laws were barriers to the free movement of Texas stock both to market and to the northern plains.⁵ By 1880 the cause of the Texas fever had been discovered, and measures such as quarantine and dipping were practiced to prevent and eventually to eradicate the disease.⁶

The long drive to the North was full of hardships. The men were out in all kinds of weather, and in the saddle for many days without a rest. The cattle had to be carefully watched, for these wild longhorns were always ready to stampede when they were excited. Storms made them nervous and

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁶ Dele, "Those Kansas Jayhawkers," *Agricultural History*, Vol. XI, p. 66.

caused many stampedes, which were dangerous enough to be hazardous to the life of the men caring for them. No wonder the cowboys were ready to enjoy themselves in the saloon at the end of the drive.

The general ill feeling after the war between the North and South was kept alive by tales being retold.⁷ Thus when the Texas cattle were not sick and the quarantine law was allowed to lapse, some people took it into their hands to make a law of their own. The farmers of southern Kansas went out in force to repel the hordes of wild beasts which stampeded across their farms, and threatened their own stock with Spanish fever. The stock was held up, and men were killed in the arguments which resulted.⁸ There was more protest than usual, when in 1884 a law was passed which forbade the cattle entering the State except between December 1 and March 1. This decreased the possible time of entry by another month and covered the entire season of the drive.⁹ There was no grass growing between December 1 and March 1, therefore drives were not practical when cattle had no feed along the way.

The herds on drive grew smaller, and by the middle

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁹ State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1884, pp. 306-311.

nineties they had virtually ceased. This was due for the most part to three reasons; hardships on the trail, difficulties at the Kansas border, and the completion of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad which operated from Kansas City to Fort Worth.

This railroad lessened the cost of sending the early cattle to market, for they could be shipped directly to Kansas City. Because of the quarantine law, if the cattle were driven it was necessary to drive them to the western part of the State before they were loaded on the train to be shipped to market.

In the late summer of 1886, Texas fever created considerable excitement in the Flint Hills, in Morris County. But since the cause of the disease and manner of treating were then known it did not take long to get it under control.¹⁰ A few years later in 1890 the fever caused much havoc among the native cattle in Elk and Chautauqua Counties. Feeling ran so high that two murders resulted.¹¹ Thousands of cattle had been brought into Kansas just prior to the first day of March, the time prescribed by the law governing the shipment of such cattle. This demonstrated that the law was at fault, for the cattle shipped just

¹⁰ The Council Grove Cosmos, August 6, 1886.

¹¹ Alma Enterprise, July 11, 1890.

previous to the first day of March spread the deadly disease among the native cattle and caused great loss of property.¹² Since there were outbreaks of the disease in several parts of Kansas, the legislature sought to improve conditions. The new law permitted Texas cattle to enter Kansas between December 1 and February 1.¹³ In 1907 and 1914 Kansas had her last Texas fever scares, this is undoubtedly due to stringent laws which provide for dipping and inspection.

The people of Kansas had not successfully dealt with one disease before another was discovered in their midst. The foot-and-mouth disease took its toll in 1884.¹⁴ People wrote to Governor G. W. Click to request a call of an extra session of legislature for appropriations to fight the disease. Governor Click, William Sims, Secretary of the State Board of Agriculture, and a United States Veterinary Surgeon of Leavenworth made inspections at the scene of excitement caused by the hoof-and-mouth malady. They found the trouble overemphasized by the farmers, but recommended a quarantine. This measure lessened the high pitch of excitement. After a thorough investigation by the United States Veterinary Surgeon, a mass meeting was held. Money was contributed for

12 Ibid., July 18, 1890.

13 State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1891, pp. 346-348.

14 Topeka, Kansas, The Commonwealth, March 13, 1884.

the losing farmers in payment for dead stock.¹⁵

Some of the people of Woodson, Coffey, Lyon, Morris, and Chase Counties (the latter four are Flint Hill counties) became impatient, and asked the Kansas representative in Congress to seek national aid and authority for eradicating the foot-and-mouth maledy.¹⁶ This was not necessary, for in this instance the disease was soon eradicated.

It again appeared in the Kansas herds in 1914 and 1915. Governor Capper asked the legislature for a \$5,000 appropriation to stamp out the disease, and they granted \$10,000.¹⁷ A law was likewise passed which forbade the importation of infected stock. A quarantine was placed upon all cattle. Consequently, with the exception of those for immediate slaughter there was virtually no movement of livestock.¹⁸ The diseased cattle were killed, and the State paid owners one-half price for losses. In later years the counties reimbursed such unfortunate cattlemen.

As early as 1889 herd owners had to contend with the disease known as blackleg. This disease destroyed more cattle than all other diseases combined in Texas, Kansas,

15 Topeka Daily Capital, March 7, 1884. March 8, 1884.

16 Kansas City Journal, March 10, 1884.

17 State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1915, pp. 34-35.

18 Topeka Daily Capital, February 4, 1915.

Nebraska, Colorado, and the Dakotas. Over a large part of the beef-raising regions there was an annual loss of from ten to twenty per cent of the yearling stock.¹⁹ There was much joy in the hearts of the owners of beef cattle when there was discovered a satisfactory vaccine for the prevention of blackleg. Soon after the discovery, in order to show its true value, the United States Department of Agriculture furnished the vaccine to infected ranges free of charge. The worth of it was soon proven. This germ disease is still prevalent, and breaks out in different localities each fall, winter, and spring. However, farmers who will take the precaution to vaccinate their calves find a reliable safeguard. The vaccine is no longer furnished by the State, but every farmer and rancher should now know its value. Breeders with many cattle seldom fail to vaccinate all calves each year.

In July 1894 the Alma Enterprise of Webster County carried an article about a disagreeable pest--the horn fly. Much complaint was heard because this insect gave the cattle no rest by night or day. There was no way to fight the fly. A speaker of the State University, Professor Snow, while in the county informed the people that the infection process might be used on the horn fly, the same as on the chinch

¹⁹ Caldwell Journal, May 31, 1889.

bug.²⁰ Experimentation did not prove this method successful, but later investigation proved that relief could be obtained from this insect by applying substances of an oily character.²¹

The people believed the horn fly was brought here by Texas cattle, but this was an erroneous idea, as the horn fly was almost unknown in that state. It came from France, and first appeared in New Jersey, and from there was carried West.²²

An act was passed by the State legislature in 1909 for the suppression and eradication of tuberculosis. Inspection and disposal of such affected cattle was provided. The sale or purchase of diseased animals for food was prohibited.²³ This is a disease that may have affected cattle for many years, but it is not detected as easily as some of those named earlier. This disease concerns the cattle industry at the present time, for it may be contracted by human beings through consuming the meat or milk of affected livestock. Inspection is required, and the overhead cost of production of meat and milk is increased.

²⁰ Alma Enterprise, April 12, 1909.

²¹ State Board of Agriculture, Eleventh Biennial Report, 1897-98, pp. 134, 185.

²² Alma Enterprise, July 27, 1894.

²³ State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1909, pp. 309-312.

Annoying parasites of cattle were sucking and biting lice. These did not kill the cattle, but they limited the gains. It took only a few years to discover that dipping, and treatments with medicinal powder were successful means of eradication.²⁴

Mange, a skin infection, caused by another parasite was so irritating that a law was passed which ordered all affected animals dipped.²⁵ This was an effective method of control.

Thus farmers and ranchers had not only to obtain food and water for their livestock, but also to protect them from disease. Disease means loss of life among the cattle, and loss of life means loss of profit, which is the ultimate aim of the rancher.

²⁴ State Board of Agriculture, Eleventh Biennial Report, 1897-98, pp. 134, 185.

²⁵ State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1911, p. 555.

Chapter VI

THE FLINT HILLS AS A STAGE IN THE FINISHING
OF TRANSITORY CATTLE

Each year more than 300,000 cattle come into the Bluestem grazing region, and are sent out either as good grass-fed stock in summer, or as grain-fed animals sometime during the winter or early spring.¹ The Bluestem grazing area comprises a vast amount of rolling hilly land which is ideally suited to grazing. In the fertile valleys of this area, and in the border areas are grown the feed crops which in later years have become important, for producing the grainfed market-class animals.

In the early seventies Joseph McCoy realized that if the cattle drives from Texas to Kansas were to continue, the drovers would be wise to get possession of choice ranch locations and hold their stock over winter. This was imperative, since it was necessary to fatten the animals. It was not profitable to put lean cattle on the market.² Thus one Abilene enterprise was the business of buying late in the fall the thin unmarketable cattle, and holding them over the winter to fatten on the native grasses during the

1 J. D. Graham, "Report of the State Board of Agriculture," in The Kansas Teacher, Vol. XLV (January, 1937), p. 37.

2 McCoy, Cattle Trade of East and Southwest, p. 416.

following summer.³ This was a profitable business, and when the grass around Abilene was closely cropped the cattle were taken to further areas. These cattle now reached the bluestem pastures, which quarantine laws had forbidden to drovers. Grass seemed to be unlimited for summer grazing, and millions of tons of hay were put up for winter feed.⁴ Grain was also raised in the area, and could be bought at a low price. The men from the Flint Hills went to Abilene to buy Texas cattle to graze on the land. They shipped by trains to parts of the grassland. In this way the wrath of the farmers who held domesticated cattle was avoided. It was not necessary to appease this anger if the cattle had been wintered near Abilene, and the ticks that caused Texas fever had been killed by cold weather.

The bluestem grass was so tall in this central Kansas area that before 1900 there were many bad prairie fires. The long rank grass of the prairie burned like tinder. In the fall of 1871 hundreds of acres of grass and tons of hay were consumed in Morris County within a weeks time.⁵ Since some of the cattle ranged practically all winter this was a severe loss, and some of the cattle had to be driven west to

3 Ibid., p. 214.

4 Ibid., p. 396.

5 Council Grove Democrat, October 15, 1871.

exist on the buffalo grass that was so short it did not burn readily. That winter there were severe storms, and the freight rate was so high it was not practical to ship the thin cattle.⁶

The next year the grass was good, and the cattlemen showed a profit, but in 1873 the cattle were so thin because the grass was "washy"; that is to say, so soggy it was unfit or of little value for grazing. There was little corn that year to fatten the cattle. The demand for cattle was low, so it was a year of financial ruin to many cattlemen.

1874 and 1875 were years of drought, grasshoppers, and locusts, but the Flint Hills were better off than most regions, because of the valuable grass crop. The early cattle fed there were all Texas longhorns. It was seen that these cattle of proper age grew very fat on the native grasses of central Kansas, especially, after having wintered here and become acclimated. The following years saw more rain, and the cattle and horses were able to make their own living from early spring until winter.⁷

In 1884 grazing was the important industry of the Blue-stem country, and it is interesting to note, in the appendix, a table showing the taxation evaluation of these

⁶ McCoy, op. cit., p. 228.

⁷ Alma Enterprise, April 18, 1877.

counties in comparison to others of the State. A reminder of the importance of this land for grazing is seen when each year in April there is mention made in the newspapers of the condition of the grass, and the coming of the cattle.⁸

The Santa Rita Land and Mining Company of Arizona in 1886 originated the idea of leasing pastures for grazing the cattle in the Kansas grass from early May until early fall and then rushing them to market. A huge profit was made on their first 1,000 cattle shipped here. Other large companies grazed cattle the following year, and the Flint Hills received some valuable advertising, when the companies told of their profits. The cattle of the Southwest were transported over the Santa Fe Railroad, while the cattle of the South traveled on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad.⁹ These cattle made the counties rich. The grain raised was sold for a nice profit, if it was necessary to hold the cattle for winter feeding, and hay from the nutritious grasses were far above premium.¹⁰

These cattle, as they came into the State, were in very poor flesh, a number died before reaching their destination. The majority were shipped from Texas, New Mexico, and

8 Ibid., 1885-1938. Bekridge Independent, 1918-1938.

9 Topeka Journal, March 22, 1889.

10 Saline Journal, May 15, 1889.

Arizona, and were inferior to the native cattle. Although stock of the present day still comes from these three states, the cattle have now been improved by shipping pure-bred bulle to the breeding ranges.

There were three methods used to contract cattle for the Flint Hills. First: Men went to Abilene and Dodge City to buy the cattle to graze on the grass. Second: The great corporations of the South and West came to Kansas to make arrangements for shipping their cattle here for grazing. Third: When partnerships and corporations were formed in Kansas, Kansans went to the ranges to choose cattle in good flesh, and of a superior grade. If they wished to get them in prime condition before marketing, they bought two, three, and four-year-old steers to graze through the summer, and were full-fed for several months in the winter before they were sent to slaughter. It was considered advisable for many people to buy some cattle, and lease any remaining pasture to the great cattle companies. These corporations were anxious to get the Bluestem pastures for summer grazing and made contracts early with the owners, or those who made a practice of leasing large areas. Men like A. G. Allendorph, and the Davis Brothers of Alma, Waugh Brothers, and Lockhart of Eskridge went to Texas, bought a trainload of cattle to graze and winter feed, and while there arranged

to lease pastures for Texas cattlemen. To lease pastures required less financial backing.

Often cattle that had been put on the pasture by the first of May, were shipped as grass-fat cattle to the Kansas City market by the latter part of July. Kansas City was the chief grass-cattle market. Then another trainload of cattle would arrive, perhaps from New Mexico, to replace the marketed livestock for the remainder of the season.¹¹

In 1889 the cattlemen of the Bluestem area were unfavorable to a law passed by the legislature. The law provided that livestock located in the State after the first of March for the purpose of grazing it, should have by September 1 acquired actual status. Upon acquiring legal status, cattle could be taxed, unless, the owners showed that the property had already been taxed in another state. This was an inconvenience to the people owning the cattle, and to those owning the pastures. The owners of the pasture sometimes paid the tax in order to get them rented. However, when any person, association, or corporation settled or organized in the State in which the property was taxed, then if owners showed they had been taxed; the assessment was returned.¹² According to present-day laws cattle owners need not be residents, if they can show they have paid their

¹¹ Alma Enterprise, August 1, 1890.

¹² State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1889, pp. 434, 519.

tax. The Dingley Tariff of 1897 was objectionable to the settlers of Kansas, because there were some cattle shipped from Mexico. The law prohibited free importations of cattle and hides from any foreign country into the United States. Since people would not pay a tax for cattle shipped from Mexico, there were no cattle shipped from that country, and there was an implied repeal of the bill in 1930.

By the 1890's so many cattle were being grazed and fed in Wabsunsee County that land, which had been counted worthless, was a source of revenue to owners. Very little grain of any kind except that on foot was shipped to an eastern market. Real estate was on the upward move, some land in the Kaw Valley near Maple Hill sold for \$45 an acre, and there were many land sales.¹³

Each day in spring there are shipments of cattle in the grassland area. Trainloads come in to be grazed, and carloads of winter-fed cattle are sent to market. At Alma a small town in Wabsunsee County, on one Sunday in May five trainloads of cattle were unloaded.¹⁴ This was just one of the six places in the county to which cattle could be shipped. The firm of Rickenshouer and McKahan, that week received a trainload of Arizona cattle which was the first

¹³ Alma Enterprise, May 8, 1891.

¹⁴ Ibid., May 30, 1891.

installment of the 14,000 head they pastured on the range east of Alma. By July 24, they were on their outward trek to the Kansas City and Chicago markets.¹⁵ Other cattle were coming in to take their place in the pasture, and later these would be placed in the feedlots to consume the corn raised in the valleys. This endless chain goes on year after year; usually there is a gain, but often there is a loss to the owners.

Trainloads in the nineties were not so large as these today. There were from fourteen to twenty cars to a train, each car contained from thirty to thirty-three head when they were thin, when they had put on enough weight to be ready for market only twenty-five or twenty-six were put in the car for shipment. Of the 300,000 that come into the Flint Hills, Wabaunsee County receives from 30,000 to 40,000, about 80 trainloads.

Cattle put on grass often gain from two to three pounds a day during the early part of the season when the grass is green and very palatable. The grass-fed cattle on the average, weigh from 1,000 to 1,200 pounds when taken to market, while grain-fed cattle weigh from 1,300 to 1,700 pounds.¹⁶

¹⁵ Kansas City Star, April 6, 1897.

¹⁶ Hilton, "Bluestem vs Bluegrass," in Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twelfth Biennial Report, 1899-1900, pp. 540-542.

By 1897 there was mention of the overstocking of pastures, a condition prevailing today. The cattlemen found that as a general rule they were doing their pastures harm by having less than five acres per cow for summer grazing. It was at this time that many of the ranchers began to show a marked preference for native cattle which had been improved by more careful breeding. Native cattle have, however, never been able to fill the pastures of the Bluestem, and many cattle are still imported for grazing. Due to financial losses less are purchased by native cattlemen than in former years. Money may be lost through ownership of cattle, but since a lien on livestock takes precedence over any claim for an unpaid pasture bill, owners of the grass are certain to have their pasture bills paid.¹⁷ In the spring of each year there are advertisements to pasture from twenty to thirty head of cattle.¹⁸ These are the owners who do not have enough cattle to fill their own small pastures. They have not contacted the cattlemen of other states, and usually rent to a neighbor who has a herd too large for his pasture.

Formerly some pastures in the Bluestem area were very large, a few of the largest in Wabaunsee County were:

17 State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1937, p. 400.

18 Alma Enterprise, May 11, 1908.

Mulvane, 8,000 acres; Blood, 5,000 acres; and Lockhart, 6,400 acres.¹⁹ It was indeed a sight to see the prairie fires in early spring when these pastures were burned off for cattle to be able to eat the fresh green grass. Although this was once one of the requirements of owners of cattle to be grazed, it is harmful to the grass and is now seldom practiced.

Many cattle must be pastured in the Flint Hills, for few steers from the short grass ranges are considered ready for either the fattening lot or butchers block until they have spent one season on this grass.²⁰ It has become common to go to Kansas City to get a car of cattle that have been grass-fed. They grain-feed them for the winter and re-ship them to Kansas City. This is the method employed by some who do not graze cattle, but raise corn and have feed lots in which to feed them.

In 1906 western Kansas began sending cattle into the Bluestein area. The Moffitt Commercial Company was the first to ship their cattle to Wabaunsee County, and later cattle came from Kiowa and Ashland, Kansas. In 1907 beef cattle reached their peak in numbers, but after a sharp decline,

¹⁹ George A. Clide and Co, Standard Atlas of Wabaunsee County (Chicago, 1914), pp. 48-49, 44-45, 32-33.

²⁰ Alma Enterprise, April 24, 1915.

the World War increased the demand for cattle and the price for pasturage. In 1915 U. S. Frank had the Mulvane pasture filled with cattle that brought \$6 per head for the season. The following year the prevailing price was \$9 a head, for from four to six acres of pasture.²¹ The people then realized their grass was worth real money. The peak of high prices was reached when in 1920 the Frank Brothers rented the big Mulvane pasture for \$15 dollars a head straight through.²² This price is now down to from \$9 to \$9.50 per head for 1936, and seven to eight acres of grass per head are required.²³

Each year, even up to the present time, the cattlemen of the county buy the corn that is raised in their locality. The farmers husk their corn and haul it, by wagons and now by trucks to the cattle feeders lot. In this way the farmer gets a high price for the grain and the feeder has no shipping charges to pay, or hauling to do. Often when the cattle are to be fed roughage for the winter, the feeder will bring the cattle to the shocks of corn or sorghums that are to be fed. He will pay the farmer for the feed and care of the cattle. The numerous herds in feed lot and pasture have

21 Ibid., May 5, 1916.

22 Ibid., April 23, 1920.

23 Askridge Independent, March 3, 1936.

helped to keep the soils for the growing grains fertile.

Although these grain crops are raised in the Plaquemine area, a greater per cent of its land is in pasture. No county has less than 90 per cent prairie, or less than 67 per cent upland. This accounts for the large acreage of pasture.²⁴

²⁴ Kansas Academy of Science, Third Annual Report, 1874, p. 289.

Chapter VII
FROM LONGHORN TO HERFORD

The first cattle of Kansas were the Texas longhorns with their ability to forage for themselves and to protect themselves. Soon the more enterprising ranchmen saw the importance of improving their herds. Albert Crane, Esq., a resident of Chicago, Illinois bought a ranch in Marion County, before 1874, and placed there a herd of fine purebred Shorthorn cattle. A purebred bull, Prince Alfred, was of the best strains of blood.¹ Other ranchers bought Shorthorn bulls from breeders in Kentucky, Missouri, and other states. Liberal cross breeding with this blood soon made a great improvement in Texas cattle, increasing their size, improving their form, and refining their appearance in head and horn. These grades were more desirable in every way, and sold more readily and for more money. For many years Shorthorn bulls were the only source of improvement, and they laid a good solid foundation for the beef cattle industry. Later Herefords and Angus were imported more extensively into the United States and the Bluestem area.²

There was an effort on the part of many to begin

1 McCoy, Cattle Trade of West and Southwest, p. 397.

2 Kansas City Star, May 4, 1913.

raising purebred stock, when by 1884 prices were more reasonable. In October of that year J. W. Maylor of Alta Vista imported a Hereford bull that had the admiration of the whole county.³ Mr. Maylor started a herd that for many years was of the best in that locality. In Morris County there is the record of a man going to England to buy Hereford cattle in 1885.⁴ These men must have been amply repaid for their venture in Herefords for although prices in 1886 were low, and sales hard to make, the price of grade Herefords was reasonably good.⁵

James McMahon of Kabaunsee County was of the number who preferred the polled Angus to Shorthorns and Herefords, because of rapid gain.⁶ The Hereford was the choice of many. During the decade following 1890 Hereford bulls were used more widely than any other breed on the range, and their badge of white face soon appeared on the majority of ranch cattle.⁷ From the appearance of the cattle while driving through the hills in the summer the Hereford is still a prime favorite. Herefords have the advantage of maturing early and being good grazers.

3 Alma Enterprise, October 8, 1884.

4 Council Grove Cosmos, July 4, 1884.

5 Marysville News, May 16, 1886.

6 Alma Enterprise, June 8, 1888.

7 Kansas City Star, May 4, 1913.

It is known that by this time the western cattle had been much improved. Cattle shipped in by Stuewe Brothers of Alma, which made a gain of three and one-half pounds a day, were New Mexican white faces.

The white faces were said to win the day in 1897 at a sale in Junction City when 17 grade Herefords averaged 1531 pounds. They were smooth and fleshy clear down to the hocks, something never seen in Texas cattle, and at once attracted the attention of the buyers. They were sold for \$5 a hundred, the top price of the day, and were used for export trade.⁸

Another breed received consideration when Henry Wille started a herd of Durhams--thirty-four purebred cows, and a purebred Durham bull--for which he paid eighty dollars.⁹

Shorthorns were preferred by many people if they had a herd of their own, for they produced both beef and milk to a good advantage. A Shorthorn bull at a sale at Manhattan, Kansas in 1900 brought \$175.¹⁰ In a survey taken of cattlemen of the Bluestem area, those of Butler and Greenwood Counties preferred Shorthorns, the nearer purebred the better. Calves that had run with cows were considered choice.

⁸ Junction City Journal, April 23, 1897.

⁹ Alma Enterprise, April 30, 1897.

¹⁰ Ibid., April 13, 1900.

All the men preferred dehorned cattle for drylot feeding, but chose cattle with horns in grazing, as they did not bunch. Cattlemen of Geary, Marshall, and Wabaunsee Counties preferred Herefords. They believed it was more profitable to raise their cattle than to buy them, for they could produce better stock, and were in favor of providing good shelter. The ranchers of Flk, Pottawatomie, and Marion Counties elected the Shorthorn and Hereford, and believed there was no place like Kansas for maturing and fattening stock. J. C. Nichol of Chase County selected either Hereford or Angus blood and thought there was little difference between feeders raised and feeders bought. This was true if those bought were carefully selected.¹¹

Although Herefords were the common cattle of Wabaunsee County, others were sometimes preferred. C. L. Davis, a rancher, acquired 840 acres of pasture and farm land and in 1900 owned 350 cattle. Besides that he leased and pastured 10,000 head of westerns. He had forty-five head of purebred Calloway cattle.¹²

Again a change of idea, which resulted in new blood in the County was when V. E. Bolton of Mexico, bought Aberdeen Angus cattle from ranchers of Cottonwood Falls.¹³

¹¹ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Eleventh Biennial Report, 1897-98 (Topeka, 1899), pp. 135-164.

¹² Alma Enterprise, June 22, 1900.

¹³ Ibid., April 17, 1903.

In 1903 W. J. Tod, cattleman of Maple Hill, was doing his part to improve Texas cattle, for he shipped two cars of pedigreed Hereford cattle there.¹⁴

More and more herds were being built up with purebred material, and this caused an increase in price. In 1913 several of the County men bought Hereford cows priced at \$150 to \$185 at the Funkhouser sale at Kansas City, where \$440 was paid for a yearling bull.¹⁵

In 1916 began the first important attempt to improve dairy herds. Otto Stuewe went to Michigan for Holstein cows.¹⁶ Lee Brothers and Cook of Harveyville bought an entire herd of 73 head of purebred Holstein cattle from New Holstein, Wisconsin. Some of the cows had excellent butter records. Dairy cattle are increasing in popularity as the population of the area increases.¹⁷

The World War and the renewed efforts to improve southern and western herds placed purebred cattle, particularly Herefords, at a premium price. It was not unusual to sell for \$100 a six months old Hereford bull, to be shipped to Texas to later head a herd. Well advertised herds such as

14 Ibid., May 7, 1907.

15 Ibid., May 14, 1913.

16 Ibid., May 4, 1916.

17 Topeka Daily Capital, April 15, 1916.

the one owned by Jake Southard of Comiskey commanded extreme prices. At a sale once held by him, bulls were sold for \$1,000 and cows for as much as \$500. In 1919 he went to Europe to visit the best herds of England. He bought the best bull he could find in England, and sold 5,000 cattle to the French government to restock that country. He was called the Comiskey Hereford King, but like many other cattle kings who expected the high prices of purebred cattle to stay, overstocked and went badly into debt.¹⁸ In a few years, not later than 1924, a great many of those cattlemen had lost large fortunes, but they had done their bit to advertise the cattle and improve the herds of this State and the herds of the South and Southwest.

The Hereford Breeders Association was so active that^x they sponsored a big Hereford sale in Alma each spring, and in Council Grove each fall. These sales had a wide following; therefore cattle brought excellent prices.¹⁹

Some of the important Hereford breeders not caught in the web of misfortune were: Robert H. Hazlett of Eldorado, who before his death ordered a dispersal sale of his stock that attracted buyers from many states. The pride of his

¹⁸ Alma Enterprise, April 18, 1919.

¹⁹ Ibid., April 25, 1919. April 25, 1920.

herd was the bull, Anxiety 4.²⁰ Another was Dan Casement of Manhattan, a breeder and feeder of livestock, whose cattle each year at stock shows win grand-champion prizes. Wm. J. Tod of Maple Hill weathered the difficulties, and Frank Manning of Morris County still has many fine Herefords.

Although the Herefords are the cattle of the Bluestem area, the Shorthorn has a large following. These breeders believe that the "Shorthorn as a farmer's cow combines size, beef, milk, butter, and turns rough feeds to cash."²¹

The people of Kansas, as a whole, are interested in improving their stock. In 1917 the legislature passed a law granting eminent domain for conducting a fair, for display of livestock.²² Thus advancement is encouraged by the State, and each fall livestock displays are held in many sections.

Vocational Agriculture judging teams are acquiring a first-hand knowledge of purebred livestock, and learning to appreciate its value in their high school training. This gives a desire for further training, and establishes livestock raising as a life occupation.

²⁰ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-eighth Biennial Report, 1931-32, pp. 17-36.

²¹ G. A. Laude, Kansas Shorthorns (Iola, 1920), p. 618.

²² State of Kansas, Session Laws, 1917, p. 341.

Chapter VIII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATTLE BREEDING IN THE BLUESTEM AREA

Lime has been said to be the foundation of the breeding herd. If this is true the Kansas Flint Hills should be a breeders' paradise. It vitalizes and stimulates every plant, they why not cattle? The famous Kentucky horses and Shorthorn cattle were built on limestone soils. England and Scotland, where the Shorthorn, Hereford, Angus, and Galloway breeds originated and were developed are noted for their limestone soils.

There are many advantages for breeding in this section of the State. Some of them are:

1. Its healthy climate and comparatively dry winters.
2. The hardy wild bluestem grass reaches its highest perfection on the limestone formation, and for fattening beef cattle or nourishing young growing stock during the summer months probably has no equal among all the legumes or grasses, wild or tame.
3. Its pure limestone spring water in every pasture.
4. The fodder and green crops raised on the rich bottom lands insure nutritious forage and grain crops wherever

the lime and phosphate fertility of the soil is fully maintained.

5. This pasture and feeding district is in the center of the Kansas corn belt, where the cattle feeder can quickly replenish his bins in case of a shortened supply of grain and do it with a short haul, by either truck or rail.

The Kansas breeder who has these advantages, secures and saves a larger calf crop and saves the loss from shrinkage in transit from the Southwest, saves the freight, and is in a position where he can build up the prime breeding herd, that will meet the demand of the market for the most choice meat."¹

Breeders were for many years slow to recognize the value of the Bluestem pastures for breeding, although they had recognized them for many years for their feeding value. In 1902 W. J. Tod of Maple Hill bought 50,000 acres of the XIT ranch in the Panhandle. He used it for breeding the stock which he later shipped to his Maple Hill ranch to be fed. This XIT ranch was the largest ranch in the United States until it was divided.² In 1911 the firm of Fowler and Tod sold the Crossell ranch of 60,000 acres near Coleman,

¹ Hilton, "The Bluestem Pastures of Kansas," in Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-sixth Biennial Report, 1927-28, pp. 187-194.

² Alma Enterprise, March 14, 1902.

New Mexico to a St. Paul syndicate, the new owners expected to sell the ranch in small areas. Here the former owners had a herd of Herefords for breeding purposes. Mr. Tod then devoted his time to the large ranch at Maple Hill where 2,000 cattle were fed. Most of them were raised at the Crossall ranch.³

In 1927 the Tods regained the Crossall ranch to use as a place to supply their feeding ranch at Maple Hill. These fed cattle are sold at Kansas City and St. Joseph.⁴

Dan Casement feeds grand champions and usually sells them to Chicago. His success is due the Hereford cattle with which he enjoys working. He is a breeder and a feeder, but in the past many of his cattle put in the feed lot were selected from the Texas range.⁵ In an address at the Snice-Bar farms at Grein Valley, Missouri, Mr. Casement stated that the size of the herd is fixed by the acreage of grass available in summer. He also stated that in the matter of grass, that part of Kansas with bluestem in the Flint Hills was favored. It could not be surpassed for the grazing of either calves or steers during the early part of the summer.⁶

³ Kansas City Star, April 10, 1911.

⁴ Topeka Daily Capital, March 9, 1930.

⁵ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Twenty-seventh Biennial Report, 1929-30, pp. 147-149.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 150.

Cattlemen did not realize that the frame of body and the hardiness of stock was improved by the limestone bluestem. The cattle were not so sleek and hair so shiny as the eastern bred cattle, but on the Texas range the Kansas bred cattle were able to range farther for food, and were always more vigorous and prepotent. They are excellent grazers, have better constitutions, and the death rate is lower.

The Hereford breeders who sought the range trade were quicker than their competitors to see the advantages of breeding bulls in such a way that they might adapt themselves to range conditions of herds. For this reason breeders of Herefords have larger ranches in the limestone belt, for these purebred sires. This was due to two reasons, a more progressive generation of cattlemen in the South, and successful inoculation of northern bulls protecting them from Texas fever.⁷

Of the Hereford owners that started their breeding herds some years ago and are still well known are Dan Casement, W. J. Tod, whose interests are now in the hands of his son James Tod, Robert Hazlett, who died not long ago, Frank Manning, and a score of others. Some like Jake Southard lost their fine herds and ranches.

⁷ Hilton, loc. cit., pp. 187-194.

There are also a number of Shorthorn breeders in the State who have an active association with a deep interest in the improvement of their breed. Some of these breeders were: S. S. Mitchell, Allen, with the famed bull Col. Carvel; Babet Brothers, Auburn; and J. A. Pringle, Bekridge with direct descendent in his herd from the great Roan Gauntlet.⁸

The last five years of drouth have had their effect on the Bluestem area. The carrying capacity of the pastures is cut, some sources of water were shut off, and the feed supply reduced. Breeding herds in particular were liquidated, for they represented some much-needed money, and such legumes as alfalfa upon which winter feed of the herd depends was killed by drouth.⁹ It will take time to build up these herds and the pastures that have been so affected by the drouth.

The question in the minds of many people today is, what future changes will the Flint Hills see? Will they be able to go back to former days? Herds are smaller, pastures are weedy, and the corn and millet fields are planted in wheat. Wheat is not a cattle feed. If the future rains

⁸ Laude, Kansas Shorthorn, pp. 610-618.

⁹ Topeka Daily Capital, March 5, 1938.

rebuild the bluestem pastures, we may expect cornfields to replace the wheat fields. Should wheat continue to be a profitable crop, will the corn which is needed for conditioning cattle be shipped from eastern corn producing areas, or will a new type of industry develop in this area?

APPENDIX

TYPICAL LIVESTOCK BRANDS
Brands of Wabaunsee County

George L. Burt

Registered--April 28, 1884.

Used for cattle and horses.

Description: Cattle on left thigh, horses on left shoulder.

Design

C. L. Davis

Registered--May 15, 1891.

Used for cattle.

Description: Brand on right side.

Design

John W. Haylor

Registered--May 7, 1892.

Used for cattle.

Description: L on left side $4\frac{1}{2}$ by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Design



Gustas Schultz

Registered--March 3, 1894.

Used for cattle.

Description: Brand 3 inches in diameter each way.

Design



Henderson Brothers

Registered--April 8, 1897.

Used on cattle.

Description: Double parallel lines on right hip of cow.

Design



John Lewis Schapp

Registered--October 31, 1899.

Used for cattle and horses.

Description: Cattle on right hip, horses on right shoulder.

Design

LS

Changed on June 11, 1934.

Description: L on right jaw.

Design

L

Joseph Adam

Registered--January 26, 1904.

Used for cattle.

Description: Brand on right hip.

Design

JA

Design changed December 13, 1910.

Description: Brand of cattle on left hip.

Design



Herman Tenbrink

Registered--May 10, 1906.

Used for cattle.

Description: Diamond-shaped hole in right ear.

Design



Strasen Brothers

Registered--April 27, 1907.

Used for cattle.

Description: Brand on right hip.

Design



TAXATION EVALUATION OF THE FLINT HILL COUNTIES
AND THEIR RANK IN THE STATE IN 1884

Butler-----	\$5,045,705.46	Seventh
Chase-----	\$2,584,335.00	Forty-fifth
Chautauqua----	\$1,699,083.00	Fifty-ninth
Cowley-----	\$4,435,067.38	Twelfth
Geary-----	\$2,094,336.25	Fifty-third
Elk-----	\$1,683,571.81	Fifty-fourth
Greenwood-----	\$3,751,528.40	Twenty-fifth
Lyon-----	\$6,308,680.29	Sixth
Marion-----	\$2,980,307.50	Thirty-sixth
Marshall-----	\$4,105,686.61	Seventeenth
Morris-----	\$2,239,952.73	Fiftieth
Pottowatomie---	\$4,334,142.55	Sixteenth
Riley-----	\$2,911,164.81	Thirty-seventh
Wabaunsee-----	\$2,468,967.29	Forty-second

¹ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Fourth Biennial Report, 1875, pp. 78-85.

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